

Environment Committee

January 29, 2009

Testimony of Cecily Baran

In favor of H.B. No. 661 AN ACT CONCERNING THE EXPANSION OF THE BEVERAGE CONTAINER REDEMPTION PROVISIONS TO INCLUDE WATER BOTTLES AND OTHER BEVERAGES, AND TO RAISE THE HANDLING FEE TO 10 CENTS.

I am Cecily Baran of 93 Devonshire Lane, Madison, CT, 06443. My representatives are Senator Ed Meyer and Representative Deborah Heinrich. I strongly urge you to support expansion of the Bottle Bill to include water bottles, the single largest growth area among all beverages, as well as bottles for other beverages, including sports drinks, teas, and juices.

Connecticut's BOTTLE BILL has been a huge success. It has reduced litter, saved energy, conserved valuable aluminum, petroleum and glass, and raised millions of dollars for thousands of Connecticut school and community groups. In fact, more than 1,000,000,000 Connecticut bottles and cans are returned and recycled each year at no cost to Connecticut taxpayers.

H.B. 661 updates the state's successful deposit redemption program to reflect consumers' changed beverage consumption choices, while powerfully increasing the incentive to recycle.

The purchase of water bottles in Connecticut is skyrocketing! In 2005, we used 426 million water bottles ~one and a half times as many water bottles as soda bottles, and four times as many as the bottles used for teas, fruit drinks and energy drinks combined.

Plastic bottles are a petroleum product that can be profitably recycled into new containers, textiles like fleece fabric, carpet and other products. Failure to recycle these bottles wastes this scarce resource, making us even more dependent on foreign oil.

Recycled PET is in high demand. And burning these bottles with the rest of our trash not only wastes the resource but also creates tons of unnecessary carbon dioxide, adding to the growing global warming crisis.

Expanding the redemption program is critical, because curbside recycling, which is not available in all Connecticut towns, has only achieved a success rate of about 30%. Plus, no curbside system can capture beverage containers that are consumed away from home and thrown away. Without the ten-cent incentive these containers will not be brought home and placed in recycling bins. With the incentive, they will be brought back for redemption recycling. 30 years of bottle bill success proves it. It's time now to build on this success.

The time to support our environment is NOW. For decades we have put off making painful or costly decisions that support our planet's health, always in favor of other important, and seemingly more pressing matters. It is time to recognize that there will always be needs that seem more urgent than supporting a healthier environment. It is time to recognize that ignoring the cries to "Save the Planet" is really about ignoring the issue of saving US. The planet will, in fact, go on forever. It is we humans that will not be living here forever, or at least not living a healthy life, or living a life as we know it today.

Today you have an opportunity to support a bill that not only promotes environmental health; it also offers multiple economic and social benefits. This is a win-win we cannot afford to pass up. Please pass this urgently needed and highly beneficial legislation.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.